AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A customer-configurable plant process observation portal server for collecting plant process information, in accordance with a user designated set of information sources, and for disseminating the information to users via network connections, the portal server comprising:

an extensible information source registry for storing at least identification information corresponding to an extensible set of plant information sources accessed via the portal server;

a portal server data interface, accessible via remote networked stations, providing user access to plant information associated with the set of designated plant information sources; ~~and~~

a portal configuration utility enabling a user to at least designate a new plant information source via a configuration interface, the new plant information source thereafter being added to the extensible set of plant information sources; and

a data access subsystem, interposed between the portal server data interface and the extensible set of plant information sources, and wherein data from the extensible set of plant information source is stored within the data access subsystem prior to forwarding to portal users via the portal server data interface.

2. (Original) The portal server of claim 1 wherein the portal configuration utility further enables a user to designate a manner in which data from sources of information is visually depicted on a user interface rendered by the portal server for a particular portal site.

3. (Original) The portal server of claim 1 wherein the portal server comprises at least one association with an Internet portal site from which data received from plant information sources is accessed by users.

4. (Original) The portal server of claim 1 wherein the portal server comprises at least one association with an intranet portal site from which data received from plant information sources is accessed by users.

5. (Original) The portal server of claim 1 wherein the portal configuration utility further enables a user to designate a new data handler to be added to an extensible set of data handlers that process information of particular types provided by the extensible set of plant information sources.

6. (Original) The portal server of claim 1 wherein the portal configuration utility includes computer program instructions for rendering a configuration template prompting a user to provide information associated with the new plant information source.

7. (Original) The portal server of claim 6 wherein the configuration template comprises a Web page, and the portal configuration utility is accessible by a browser.

8. (Currently amended) A customer-configurable plant process observation portal server for collecting plant process information in accordance with information source designations and for disseminating the information to users via network connections, the portal server comprising:

an extensible set of data handlers for processing differing types of data from a set of plant information sources accessed via the portal server;

a portal server data interface, accessible via remote networked stations, providing user access to plant information associated with the set of plant information sources; and

a portal configuration utility enabling a user to designate a new data handler via a configuration interface, the new data handler thereafter being added to the extensible set of data handlers; and

a data access subsystem, interposed between the portal server data interface and the extensible set of plant information sources, and wherein data from the extensible set of plant information source is stored within the data access subsystem prior to forwarding to portal users via the portal server data interface.

9. (Currently amended) A customer-configurable plant process observation portal server for collecting plant process information in accordance with user specified information source designations and for disseminating the information to users via network connections, the portal server comprising:

an extensible information source registry for storing at least identification information corresponding to an extensible set of plant information sources accessed via the portal server;

a user-configurable portal server data interface, accessible via remote networked stations, providing user access to plant information represented in the extensible set of plant information sources; and

a portal data interface configuration utility enabling a user to at least designate, via a configuration interface, a new user interface display element for presenting plant process information, the new user interface display element thereafter being added to the extensible set of plant information sources; and

a data access subsystem, interposed between the portal server data interface and the extensible set of plant information sources, and wherein data from the extensible set of plant information source is stored within the data access subsystem prior to forwarding to portal users via the portal server data interface.

10. (Currently amended) A method for facilitating configuring a customer-configurable plant process observation portal server to collect plant process information in accordance with user-specified information sources, the method comprising the steps of:

creating an extensible information source registry for storing at least identification information corresponding to an extensible set of plant information sources accessed via the portal server;

generating a portal server data interface, accessible via remote networked stations, providing user access to plant information represented in the extensible set of plant information sources; and

providing a portal configuration utility enabling a user to at least designate a new plant information source via a configuration interface, the new plant information source thereafter being added to the extensible set of plant information sources; and

providing a data access subsystem, interposed between the portal server data interface and the extensible set of plant information sources, and wherein data from the extensible set of plant information source is stored within the data access subsystem prior to forwarding to portal users via the portal server data interface.

11. (Currently amended) A method for configuring a plant process observation portal site, supported by a portal server, to extend a set of information sources associated with the portal site, the method comprising the steps of:

accessing, via a browser, a configuration page associated with the portal site;

first specifying, via a graphical user interface, a new source of plant information accessed via the portal server; and

second specifying, via the graphical user interface, how information associated with the new source of plant information is visually rendered on visual displays associated with the plant process observation portal site; and

providing a data access subsystem, interposed between the portal server data interface and the extensible set of plant information sources, and wherein data from the extensible set of plant information source is stored within the data access subsystem prior to forwarding to portal users via the portal server data interface.

12. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 1 further comprising:

a plurality of data handlers that process information of particular types provided by the extensible set of plant information sources.

13. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 12 wherein the plurality of data handlers comprises a process history database handler.

14. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 12 wherein the plurality of data handlers comprises an alarm handler.

15. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 12 wherein the plurality of data handlers comprises a data exchange protocol-specific handler.

16. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 1 wherein the extensible source registry facilitates storing plant information provided by multiple controllers, thereby facilitating accessing data generated by multiple controllers via a single physical node on a process control network.

17. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 8 wherein the set of data handlers comprises a process history database handler.

18. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 8 wherein the set of data handlers comprises an alarm handler.

19. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 8 wherein the set of data handlers comprises a data exchange protocol-specific handler.

20. (Previously presented) The portal server of claim 8 wherein the set of data handlers comprises a data handler for processing data from a controller, thereby facilitating accessing data generated by multiple controllers via a single physical node on a process control network.